

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (withdrawn-currently amended): A method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer obtained via polymerization of an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether represented by the general formula (II):

$$\text{CF}_2=\text{CF}-\text{O}-(\text{CFY}^2)_m-\text{A} \quad \text{(II)}$$

(wherein Y² represents F, Cl, Br or I, m represents an integer of 1 to 5; when m is an integer of 2 to 5, m atoms of Y² are the same or different; and A represents -SO₂X; X represents F, Cl, Br, I or -NR⁵R⁶; R⁵ and R⁶ are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group), and tetrafluoroethylene,

wherein said stabilized fluoropolymer shows an intensity ratio [x/y] between main chain terminal carboxyl group-due peak [x] and -CF₂- due peak [y] of not higher than 0.05 in IR measurement,

said stabilized fluoropolymer has a melt index of 0.1 to 20 g/10 min as measured under the conditions of 270°C and a load of 2.16 kg according to JIS K 7210,

which method comprises ~~producing said stabilized fluoropolymer by~~ subjecting a treatment target substance containing a sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer to a fluorination treatment,

wherein said sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer is a fluoropolymer containing -SO₃M (in which M represents H, NR¹R²R³R⁴ or M¹_{1/L}; R¹, R², R³ and R⁴ are the

same or different and each represents H or an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms; and M^1 represents an L-valent metal), and

said treatment target substance has a moisture content of not higher than 500 ppm by mass.

2. (withdrawn-currently amended): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 1,

wherein the sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer further contains $-\text{SO}_2\text{X}$ and/or $-\text{COZ}$ (wherein X represents F, Cl, Br, I or $-\text{NR}^5\text{R}^6$ and Z represents $-\text{NR}^7\text{R}^8$ or $-\text{OR}^9$; R^5 , R^6 , R^7 and R^8 , R^5 and R^6 are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group and R^9 represents an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms).

3. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 1,

wherein the sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer further contains $-\text{COOH}$ at the polymer chain terminus or termini.

4. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 1,

wherein the fluorination treatment is carried out using a gaseous fluorinating agent comprising a fluorine source,

said fluorine source is at least one species selected from the group consisting of F_2 , SF_4 , IF_5 , NF_3 , PF_5 , ClF and ClF_3 and

said fluorine source amounts to not less than 1% by volume of said gaseous fluorinating agent.

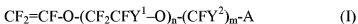
5. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 4,

wherein the fluorine source is F₂.

6. (withdrawn-currently amended): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 1,

wherein the sulfonic-acid-derived-group-containing fluoropolymer is a copolymer which is at least binary comprising

an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether represented by the general formula (I):



(wherein Y¹ represents F, Cl, Br, I or a perfluoroalkyl group, n represents an integer of 0 to 3; n atoms/groups of Y¹ are the same or different; Y² represents F, Cl, Br or I; m represents an integer of 1 to 5; when m is an integer of 2 to 5, m atoms of Y² are the same or different; A represents ~~—SO₂X or —COZ~~; X represents F, Cl, Br, I or ~~—NR⁵R⁶~~ and ~~Z represents —NR⁷R⁸ or —OR⁹; R⁵, R⁶, R⁷ and R⁸, R⁵ and R⁶~~ are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group and ~~R⁹ represents an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms~~) and

a copolymerizable monomer with said acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether, said copolymerizable monomer is an “other vinyl ether” other than said acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether and an ethylenic monomer,

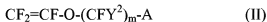
said copolymer comprises 5 to 40 mole percent of an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether unit derived from said acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether, 60 to

95 mole percent of an ethylenic monomer unit derived from said ethylenic monomer and 0 to 5 mole percent of an "other vinyl ether unit" derived from said "other vinyl ether".

7. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 6, wherein n is 0 (zero).

8. (withdrawn): The method for producing a stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 6, wherein Y² is F and m is 2.

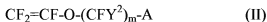
9. (currently amended): A stabilized fluoropolymer obtained via polymerization of an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether represented by the general formula (II):



(wherein Y² represents F, Cl, Br or I, m represents an integer of 1 to 5; when m is an integer of 2 to 5, m atoms of Y² are the same or different; and A represents -SO₂X- or -COZ; X represents F, Cl, Br, I or -NR⁵R⁶ and Z represents -NR⁷R⁸ or -OR⁹; R⁵, R⁶, R⁷ and R⁸; R⁵ and R⁶ are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group and R⁹ represents an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms), and tetrafluoroethylene,

wherein said stabilized fluoropolymer shows an intensity ratio [x/y] between main chain terminal carboxyl group-due peak [x] and -CF₂- due peak [y] of not higher than 0.05 in IR measurement, said stabilized fluoropolymer has a melt index of 0.1 to 20 g/10 min as measured under the conditions of 270°C and a load of 2.16 kg according to JIS K 7210.

10. (currently amended): A stabilized fluoropolymer obtained via polymerization of an acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether represented by the general formula (II):



(wherein Y^2 represents F, Cl, Br or I, m represents an integer of 1 to 5; when m is an integer of 2 to 5, m atoms of Y^2 are the same or different; and A represents $-\text{SO}_2\text{X}-$ or $-\text{COZ}-$; X represents F, Cl, Br, I or $-\text{NR}^5\text{R}^6-$ and Z represents $-\text{NR}^7\text{R}^8-$ or $-\text{OR}^9$; R^5 , R^6 , R^7 and R^8 ; R^5 and R^6 are the same or different and each represents H, an alkali metal element, an alkyl group or a sulfonyl-containing group and R^9 represents an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms) and tetrafluoroethylene,

wherein, in a hydrolyzate of said stabilized fluoropolymer, the number [X] of main chain terminal $-\text{CF}_3$ groups per 1×10^5 main chain carbon atoms of said hydrolyzate is not smaller than 10 as calculated using an integrated intensity due to main chain terminal $-\text{CF}_3$ groups and an integrated intensity due to $-\text{CF}_2-$ adjacent to an ether bond in side chains branched from the main chain in said hydrolyzate, each determined by solid state ^{19}F nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometry of said hydrolyzate in a state swollen in an oxygen-containing hydrocarbon compound having a dielectric constant of not lower than 5.0 and further using an ion exchange equivalent weight Ew value determined by titrimetric method,

said stabilized fluoropolymer has a melt index of 0.1 to 20 g/10 minutes as measured under the conditions of 270°C and a load of 2.16 kg according to JIS K 7210.

11. (currently amended): The stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 10, wherein said fluoropolymer further shows an intensity ratio [x/y] between main chain terminal carboxyl group-due peak [x] and $-\text{CF}_2-$ due peak [y] of not higher than 0.05 in IR measurement.

12. (previously presented): The stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 9, wherein the polymerization of the acid-derived group-containing perhalovinyl ether and tetrafluoroethylene is carried out in the manner of emulsion polymerization.

13. (previously presented): The stabilized fluoropolymer according to Claim 9, which is obtained by the method according to Claim 7.

14-22. (canceled).